A Poetical ESSAY

ON THE

EQUAL DISTRIBUTION

OF

HAPPINESS

AMONG MANKIND.

IN WHICH

Several Eminent CHARACTERS are touch'd.

ADDRESS'D

To His ROYAL HIGHNESS the Duke of *Cumberland.*

——— Pauci Dignoſcere poſſunt
Vera bona, atque illis multum diverſa, Remota
Erroris nebula: quid enim Ratione timemus,
Aut Cupimus? Quid tam dextro pede Concipis, ut te
Conatus non pœniteat, votique peracti? JUVENAL.

Nempe quod hæc illis natura eſt omnibus una. Idem.

If e'er Ambition did my Fancy cheat
With any Thought ſo mean as to be great,
Continue Heaven ſtill from me to remove
The humble Bleſſings of that Life I love.

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SEP

THIS

POEM

Is moſt humbly dedicated

To all Happy Men that is in the Author's Eſtimate;

To all Men of Virtue and Honour, who aſpire only to that Station in Life for which Nature deſign'd them;

And, in a particular Manner,

To His Royal Highneſs the Duke.

BRITISH MUSEUM
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A Poetical Essay

ON

HAPPINESS.

TO take a ſuperficial View of Things,
To ſee the Cringe of Slaves, the Pride of Kings,
The high vain Glory Wealth and Pow'r create,
Of Poverty the hard contemptuous Fate;
One might be ſtartled at th'unequal Share
Of Happineſs, and Nature's partial Care.
But view Things naked and without Diſguiſe,
Another Scene ſtarts up before our Eyes,
And undiſtinguiſh'd Happineſs we find
Pervades the various States of human Kind.
We fondly fancy Bliſs is only there
Where Fortune ſmiles, and where ſhe frowns, Deſpair,
Meaſure the Rates of Happineſs alone
By the Degrees of Diſtance from a Throne.

Survey the various States of human Kind,
The proper Seat of Bliſs is in the Mind;
The Paſſions of the Soul alike in all,
Nor do they vary in the Great and Small.
Hence if conſuming Luſt, or hot Deſire,
In both their Breaſts ſhall rage with equal Fire.
If heavy Care or Fear their Minds conſtrain,
And cauſe in both the ſame Degree of Pain;
Whatever elſe may vary, I confeſs,
I ſee no Difference in their Happineſs.
The Favourite who ſaves his guilty Neck
Juſt as his Arts, or Royal Grace protect,
Appears to me in much the ſame Suſpence
As he who ſuffers for a leſs Offence,
The Wretch condemn'd, the low-deſigning Thief
Who waits with timorous Hope his laſt Relief.
Or if their Joys in equal Sallies riſe,
Exulting Pleaſure ſparkle in their Eyes;
If what we think or feel are juſt the ſame,
The Ballance of our Bliſs is but a Name.
A high Deſcent, Nobility of Blood,
Is but the fancied, the fallacious Good,
That cheats the Fool and ſets off his Diſgrace.
Lord *Cully*'s proud of his illuſtrious Race;

Is he the happier for't than you or me?
I put the Caſe that we're as proud as he.
The Cauſe is vary'd, but th' Effect's the ſame
Of my Brocade, and his Anceſtor's Fame.
The Pomp, the pageant Equipage and State,
Which deck the Triumphs of the Gay and Great,
All Oſtentation! Can it be deny'd?
Are not the Marks of Happineſs, but Pride:
And whate'er Share of Happineſs ariſe
From Vanity, or to the Fool or Wiſe,
Extends to all Mankind, the Slave, the Free,
To Rich and Poor, of high and low Degree.
All Men find out ſome ſecret ſoothing Cauſe,
To flatter this fond Itch of Self-Applauſe.
Lo! every Fool can find a grave Pretence
To ſay his Brother-Fool wants common Senſe.
The ſupercilious Coxcomb's proud to ſee
A noble Fop no better dreſs'd than he,
Hates the dull Student and the plodding Cit,
And thinks his Ignorance a Mark of Wit.
The Pedant of his trifling Science vain,
All *Greek*, all formal Nonſenſe and Diſdain,
Thinks every Man a Fool who has not read,
And, without Logick, Senſe and Reaſon dead,

Mark Lady *Fanny*, who ſo fine and gay?
So happy, ſo ador'd at Park and Play;
Each curled Darling bends with gentle Air,
And courts the boaſted Favour of the Fair;
No Creature e'er ſo happy 'tis confeſt,
His Grace's Idol too above the reſt:
But lo! her Chamber-maid as bleſt as ſhe,
Feels the ſame giddy Vanity, to ſee
Each Footman in the Gallery admire,
And every parti-colour'd Fop on fire.
In ſhort, the Scale of human Life, 'tis plain,
You may aſcend, and reach the Foot again
On vary'd Fools, in Subſtance juſt the ſame.

The Gifts of Nature, the Delights of Senſe,
Our gen'ral Parent does to all diſpence
With equal Hand, nor doth he firſt inquire
Who ſhall be born a King, or who a Squire,
Deals not his Favours by the yearly Rent,
Nor marks what Fortune ſends, or may have ſent;
But tenderly beſtows on every Son
A different Portion, diſinherits none;
Points out the Path for every one to trace,
Preſcribes to all their Station and their Place.

True Happineſs from Nature's Gifts does ſpring,
I'd rather be a *Shakeſpear* than a King.
The honeſt Farmer, who exults to find
No empty Stores, and a contented Mind,
Who ſees his chearful Babes and homely Wife
Rejoyce, and bleſs the Labours of his Life,
Is happier far, than he whoſe reſtleſs Mind
Is toſt, like Fire on the tempeſtuous Wind,
Altho' the worthleſs Vulgar view the Blaze,
And future Fools with Idiot Wonder gaze,
But then you'll ſay, " the Rich and Great can find
" Some ſov'reign Methods to compoſe the Mind
" If ruffled and diſquiet, the anxious Soul
" Begins to droop, They rouſe her with a Bowl
" Of gen'rous Wine, the ſprightly Spirits riſe,
" And gloomy Care and Melancholy flies:
" Or if oppreſs'd with ſome ſevere Diſeaſe,
" They fee the Doctor and they purchaſe Eaſe.
Miſtaken Maxims, whence ariſe the Ills
Of Life? From Drunkenneſs to Doctors Pills.
" They taſte the gay Diverſions of the Town
" To make the nauſeous Draught of Life go down.
Are the falſe fooliſh Joys of Life confin'd
To the ſuperiour Ranks of human Kind?

No; every Fool of high or low Degree,
Of Taſte alike, in Happineſs agree.
If Muſick charm, or if the Dance delight,
If Joys attend the Revels of the Night,
If Gaming pleaſe —— In my Lord *Folly*'s Spite,
His Slave is happy in the ſame Degree
Who dances, games, and rakes as well as he.
" Then, if not philoſophically mad,
" You'll own a Competency muſt be had,
" Which furniſhes the Means of being bleſt
" With Independance, Liberty and Reſt:
But Competence is by no Rule defin'd,
Except by the Contentment of the Mind.
The poor Man's happy who deſires no more,
Whilſt the rich Miſer ſtarves amidſt his Store.
No Share of Plenty can abate the Fire
Of Appetite's deprav'd and falſe Deſire:
Nor will a Heart, by Nature brave and free,
Prefer diſhonour'd Wealth to Poverty.
" Tho' ſome by dint of ſhining Merit riſe,
" And ſnatch from Fortune's partial Hand the Prize,
" Yet oft the noble Mind aſpires in vain
" In Nature's Plan its proper Place to gain,

" Sees

" Sees it uſurp'd by ſome bold impious Man
" Who ſticks at nothing, ſnatches all he can:
" Or ſome obſequious ſerviceable Knave,
" Some ſly Court Devil, ſome great fav'rite Slave.
" How many Gen'rals our vaſt Armies ſhare,
" Yet only two the darling Sons of War,
" Nature's great Choice and Heav'n's peculiar Care,
" I need not name a CUMBERLAND and STAIR.
Is he then happy who invades his Place?
Is Virtue miſerable in Diſgrace?
Was *S——r* unhappy when his noble Mind
Exerted all its Virtues, tho' confin'd
Within the narrow Bounds of private Life,
Retir'd from publick Stir and factious Strife?
Was *A——e* wretched tho' a blund'ring Race
Uſurp'd in Nature's Plan his proper Place?
No, Nature's Care to all her Children juſt,
To Fortune ne'er committed ſuch a Truſt;
Nature muſt form the Genius and the Heart,
And mould them to your Station and your Part
In human Life, or you're a Wretch at beſt,
Tho' of all Fortune's glitt'ring Spoils poſſeſs'd:
Nature abhors that *Britons* e'er diſpence
With heav'nly Freedom, and ſuperiour Senſe,
To ſerve an arbitrary popiſh Prince:

Sooner will Nature ſuffer Fiends to riſe
And claim their forfeit Regions in the Skies:
The groſſeſt Contradictions may agree,
As Popiſh Pow'r and *Engliſh* Liberty.
The giddy Head, or the ungenerous Mind,
For Wealth or Pow'r by Nature ne'er deſign'd,
Are wretched, if they riſe above the Sphere
Of ſordid Life, their proper Part is there.
Hence the dull Judge with fruitleſs Labour tries,
Bewilder'd! to find out where Juſtice lies;
Perplex'd and puz'led! miſerable Man!
He ne'er had been ſo curs'd by Nature's Plan.
That Peer ſits ſlumb'ring o'er the warm Debate,
Ridiculous in his venerable Seat;
This Politician is a Wretch of State.
That Gen'ral flies the bloody Field, to find
His hoarded Treaſure or his Miſtreſs kind,
With them to ſooth the Pains of his Diſgrace,
And looſe the Cares of an ill-gotten Place.
O! if ſome Cough, ſome ſalutary Rheum,
Some kind Diſtemper, now the Winter's come,
Would ſnatch his Breath and rob his vital Senſe,
I'd mourn in State nor ſcruple the Expence,

Cry'd

Cry'd the pinch'd Heir, ſo gentle, ſo humane,
So kind and affable, ſo grave and plain.
Lo he's poſſeſt of all he wiſh'd to have!
And all his Sorrows buried in the Grave.
Now inſolent and vain, he knows no more
Thoſe honeſt Friends whom he careſs'd before;
Now madly wanton, diſſolutely gay,
He revels out the Night, and ſleeps the Day;
Profuſely waſtes his Vigour and his Store,
'Till one or other ſquander'd, is no more.
The Wretch deplores his loſt abandon'd State!
And for her kind Indulgence, curſes Fate.

The M——s had been happy, if his Fate
Had doom'd his Lot in ſome inferior State.
How happy ——— had it been thy Lot,
To die untainted with th' eternal Blot,
Of falſe Pretenſions to a Patriot's Name,
Of promis'd Faith betray'd, and ſlighted Fame.
No more the watchful Guardian of the State
Damn'd with thy Title, to be meanly great;
No more thy Country's Darling, and her Friend,
Nature deſign'd thee for a nobler End!

Thus Angels quit their Sphere, by Nature giv'n;
Satan would be a Peer, to Hell eternal driv'n,
Rather than ſerve a Commoner in Heav'n.
If thou haſt fallen to ſooth a Wife's Conceit,
Unhappy *Adam*'s dull Excuſe repeat,
The Woman gave it me, and I did eat.

Dream not of Happineſs where Fortune ſmiles,
And gaudy Shew the giddy Sight beguiles;
But glean thro' various Life the happy few,
Who follow Nature, and her Laws purſue.
Since neither Bliſs, nor Miſery are join'd
With outward Things, but temper'd in the Mind.
Since anxious Care may rack a Monarch's Breaſt,
And boiling Paſſions rob him of his Reſt,
The gilded Coach a Wretch or Fool may bear,
Fell diſcontent, or pale dejected Fear,
May hide itſelf beneath a gaudy Coat,
And ſplendid Miſery is a common Lot.

F I N I S.